

JUDAS ISCARIOT

By E. Temple Thurston

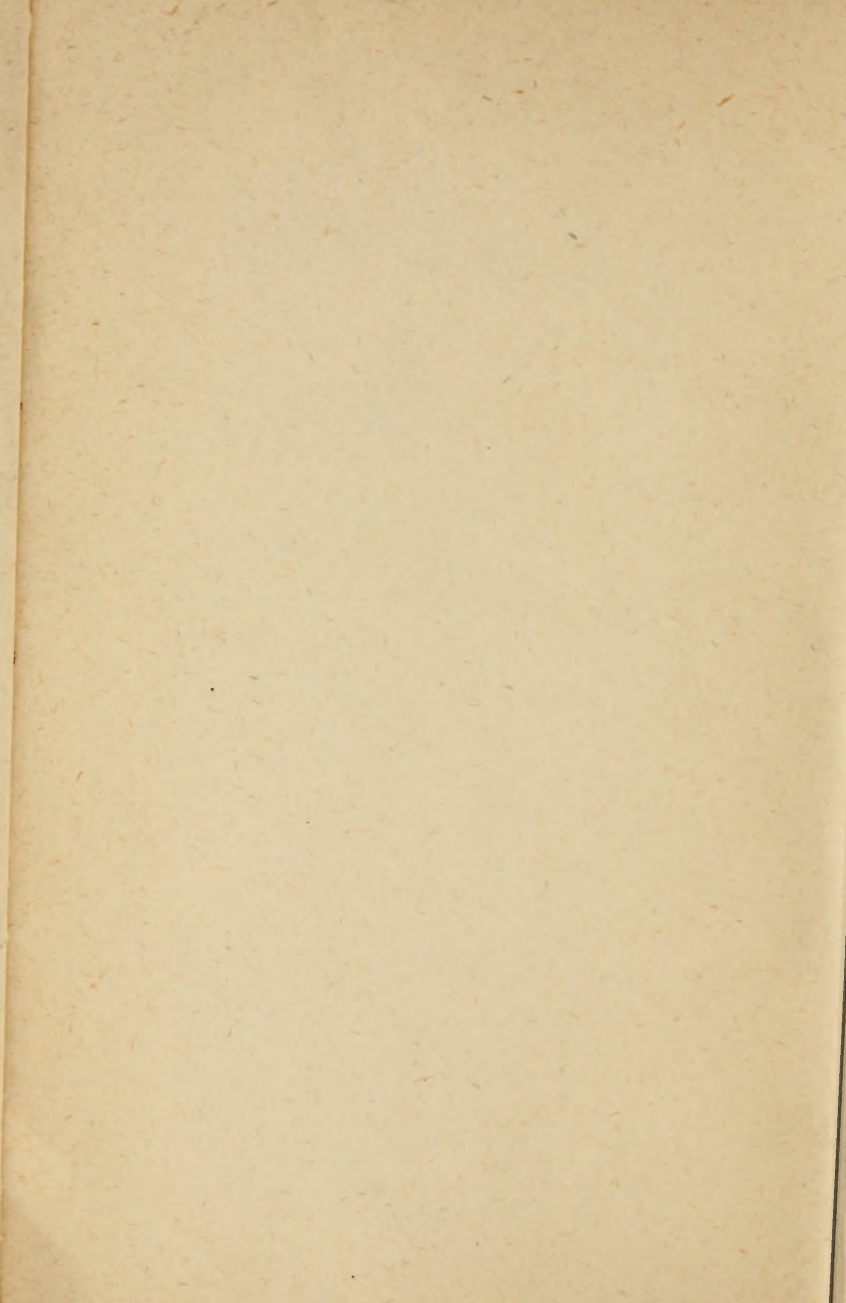
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JUDAS ISCARIOT

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

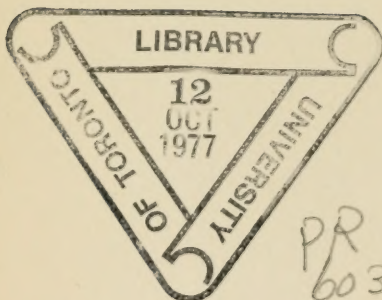
BY

E. TEMPLE THURSTON

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TO
MY FRIENDS
HENRY AND ELAINE AINLEY

LIST OF CHARACTERS

SIMON ISCARIOT (Father of Judas).

ANNA (his Wife).

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

FIRST CHALDEAN.

SECOND CHALDEAN.

THIRD CHALDEAN.

LOIS (Judas's Sister).

HULDAH (a Woman of Canaan).

GIRL OF NAIN.

THREE MEN OF NAIN.

TWO MERCHANTS OF NAIN.

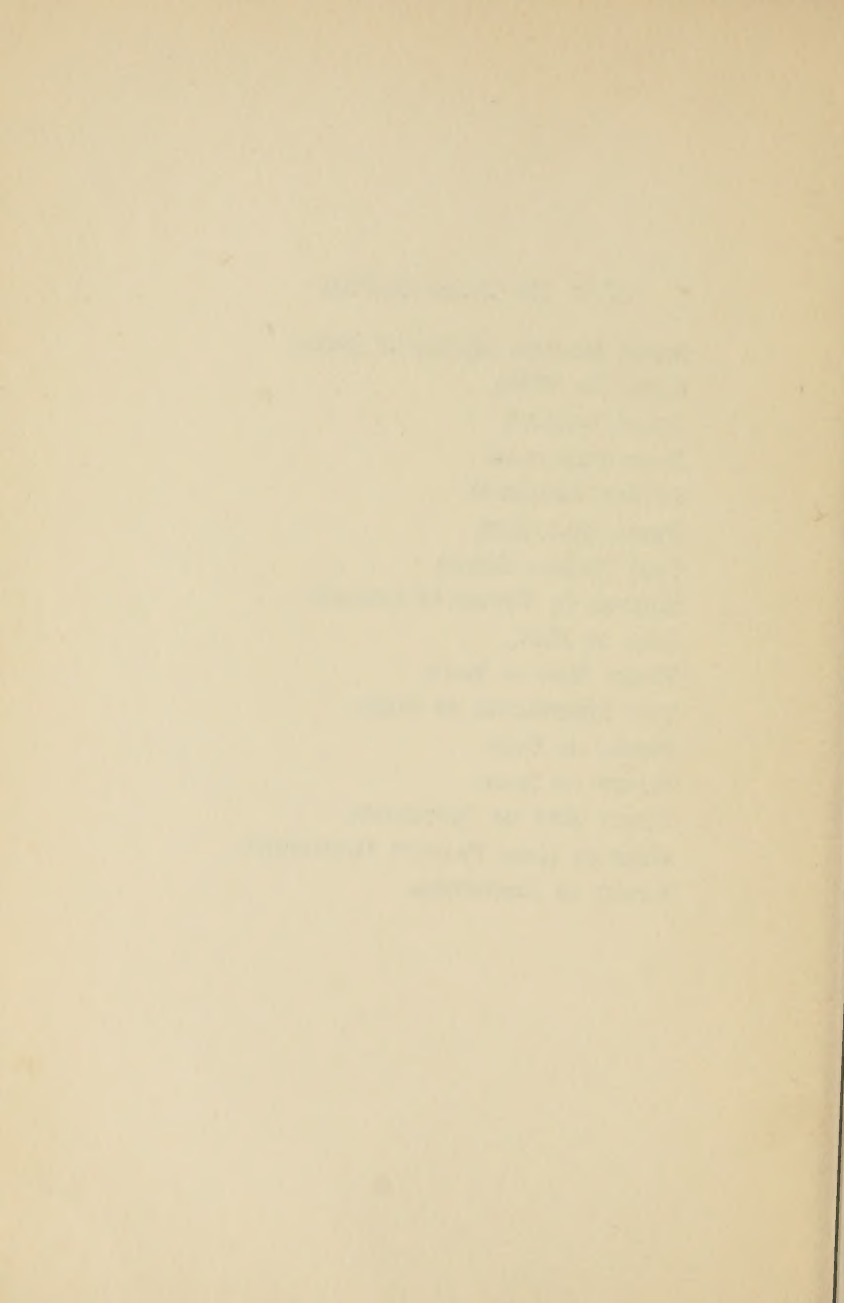
PRIEST OF NAIN.

WIDOW OF NAIN.

THREE MEN OF JERUSALEM.

MAID OF HIGH PRIEST'S HOUSEHOLD.

PRIEST OF SANHEDRIM.



ACT I

ACT I

SCENE

An open space in the hills about Kerioth, some twenty miles South of Bethlehem.

The scene slopes in wide sharp pastures of rolling land as far as the eye can see. There are no trees, no vegetation. Here and there the rock formation of the land protrudes in the half-buried face of a boulder.

At S.R. a part of a shepherd's hut dwelling thrusts into the scene. All that is visible is the roughly thatched shed used as a stall for some beast, with no door, the roof upheld by a rough-hewn post. This is up stage. Below it stands the main structure of the dwelling, with an ill-shaped door in the wall.

It is the shelter and home of a shepherd on the hillside in the heart of his pastures, hidden away from the high road that runs through Bethlehem down into Egypt.

It is late evening. The warm light of the sun setting is suffusing the wide stretch of cloudless sky.

[As curtain rises, ANNA is discovered, seated at the open doorway, with her baby suckling at her breast. After a moment, holding it closely to her, she rises and goes up S. to the edge of the hill, where it begins its first descent into the valley. There she stands, a silhouette against the warm sky, looking across the open stretches of the hills.]

[ANNA, the wife of SIMON ISCARIOT, is a woman approaching thirty years of age. She is

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a native of Jerusalem, ambitious of better things than the life which marriage with SIMON has brought her, nevertheless fiercely God-fearing and, like her husband, believing in the Law.

[*As she stands there looking out across the hills, a sudden eager movement of her body reveals her sight of her husband's approach.*]

SIMON

(*Off stage below the hill.*) Is all well?

ANNA

(*Looking tenderly at her baby and lifting its head from her breast, closing the fold of her garment as she answers.*) All's well, husband.

[*The head and shoulders of SIMON ISCARIOT appear above the ridge of the hill as he approaches up the slope.*]

[*SIMON ISCARIOT, a shepherd, is a man of some forty years of age. He is simple of speech, fearing of and obedient to the Law, superstitious and credulous as is consistent with his calling.*]

SIMON

(*Coming to her with his crook in his hand.*) Three sheep have died in the hills beyond. (*He looks at her tenderly.*) Three is all. (*Looking down at the baby.*) Does he sleep? (*There is a note of restrained eagerness in his voice.*)

ANNA

Soon he will. (*Looking at him closely.*) What is it, Simon, in your voice?

SIMON

What is in my voice?

ANNA

Something to tell.

SIMON

(*Holding his news from her.*) I have been gone but three days.

ANNA

Men live and die in less. (*She looks questioningly in his face.*)

SIMON

(*Mysteriously.*) Live and die—and come and go.

ANNA

(*Holding his arm.*) What have you seen?

SIMON

Fetch me that scroll within—and lay him down for his sleep! (*With a further look of question, she takes her baby into the house.*)

[*Exit ANNA.*

[SIMON stands on the high ridge leaning upon his crook and looking out over the pastures

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of the hills. As ANNA returns with the scroll in her hand, SIMON joins her at the door.

Enter ANNA.

SIMON

(Holding out his hand eagerly for the scroll.) The words of Enoch. *(He unrolls the script and finds the place, reading from it aloud.)* "And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen shall stir up the kings and the mighty from their lairs and the powerful from their thrones and shall loose the bridle of the mighty and break in pieces the teeth of sinners." *(He lowers the scroll in his hand, looking intently at ANNA.)*

ANNA

(Hesitating to give full voice to her thoughts.) Messiah !

SIMON

Messiah !

ANNA

Will he ever come to save Israel, Simon ?

SIMON

One night when I am tending my sheep in the hills, one morn when you are opening the door at sunrise, one hour at middle day, the road will sound with the feet of his followers.

ANNA

How shall we know it is he ?

SIMON

(*Reading from the scroll.*) “And he shall drive away the face of the mighty——”

ANNA

The persecutors of Rome, he means ?

SIMON

(*With spirit.*) We shall be taxed no more, Anna, but free men and a free people in the land of Israel !

ANNA

(*Roused in curiosity.*) What is it you are holding from me ? There is more in your voice than what you say. Simon ! What do you know ?

SIMON

I know nothing only what I hear and what I see. That is not knowledge.

ANNA

(*Almost below her breath.*) What have you seen ?

SIMON

(*Pausing.*) Two days ago, when I was herding my sheep away there to the South, there came three men from over the line of the hills.

ANNA

Were they of the Essenes ?

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SIMON

No—stranger than they. Their heads were not bare and the cloth they wore was richly spun. They were not of Judea, but from beyond the wilderness and the sea they came—men who walked by the stars and only sought their way at noon.

[With eyes fixed upon her husband, ANNA moves to the door, standing there a moment listening for her child. The evening light is deepening towards the sudden approach of night. The evening star flickers out with a pale light in the blue.]

ANNA

Did they speak with you ?

SIMON

They asked their way. It was the full tide of morning.

ANNA

Where were they going ?

SIMON

To Jerusalem—the Court of Herod.

ANNA

And said not from whence they had come ?

SIMON

From beyond Syria. I told you. It was of the

country of the Chaldees they said they were—a wise people, Anna, old in wisdom, who read the portents of the stars. That people who, in their greatness of the past, brought Israel in captivity to Babylon and now are less than the dust that gathers on their sandals.

ANNA

While greatness leads to us, Simon, when the Messiah shall come! Did they speak of that?

SIMON

It was for this they had travelled across the desert a thirty score of miles.

ANNA

(Eagerly.) Tell me! Give every word they said.

SIMON

A star they had seen, who watch and read the stars, as I sit here at night and read this scroll. A star that shone over Chaldea, strange in the heavens as they watched its light. Out of their wisdom, they had read its meaning as all who read the prophets know the glory that shall come to Israel in the land of Judah.

ANNA

What meaning had they found?

SIMON

(Doubtfully.) I would not swear that I believe the message of the stars. *(Laying his hand upon the scroll.)* Rather these words of holy men that all can read.

ANNA

(*Impatiently.*) All minds are not the same, Simon—and there are different tongues with different speech, and the Lord God of Hosts makes known His word to all. I would believe the stars, Simon, and all the messages of God.

SIMON

(*Laying his hand on her head tenderly.*) There have been false prophets, Anna, and men have called themselves Messiah. (*Contemplatively.*) Yet it was strange the words they said. (*His voice falls again to the mysterious note as he continues his story.*) By night the star had led them across the desert till they were come into Judea.

ANNA

But the message which they read? What was the message?

SIMON

(*Slow to satisfy her curiosity.*) I have heard it before. The pilgrims that come this way all speak of it. The eyes of the world, Anna, are turned towards our Holy Land. There is a whisper in the hearts of men. I hear it. From whatsoever country they may come, they speak of it, as these strange men spoke it to me, that noon of day upon the hills.

ANNA

Then tell me now!

SIMON

(*With a certain note of awe.*) "Where is He that is

born, King of the Jews?" These were their very words. "Where is He that is born, King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him."

[ANNA sits upon the ground, staring in silence at her husband, who, impressed with the words himself, looks back in silence at her.]

ANNA

(Almost below her breath.) Now? Born now?

SIMON

Born now. An infant at its mother's breast.

ANNA

(Unconsciously laying her hand on her breast.) Messiah—the King of the Jews, now born with us. (Her eyes are staring at the thoughts it conjures in her mind.) What more?

SIMON

No more. Strange, silent men they were, of little speech. They asked the road by which they might come into Jerusalem. Herod they sought, that he might tell them where this child should be and then, when I had pointed out the way, I watched them pass down the hill, each in the other's steps. Into the mouth of the valley they went, and a mist rolled over the hill and hid them from my eyes. I have seen them no more.

ANNA

(After a contemplative silence.) Read again—read again the words of Enoch.

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SIMON

(Picking up the scroll and reading.) "And He shall drive away the face of the mighty and shame shall fill them; darkness shall be their dwelling and worms their bed, and they shall have no——" *(He stops and lowers the script in his hand.)* I can see no more. Light the taper within. I will read by that.

[Exit ANNA into the house.]

[The first pale darkness of night has settled over the hills. One by one throughout the scene, the stars have been set alight in the expanse of the sky. Standing there alone, before he follows ANNA into the house, SIMON raises his head to the heavens and prays audibly.]

SIMON

Lord God of Abraham, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?

[A light glimmers through the open door. SIMON turns and slowly enters the house.]

[Exit SIMON.]

[A moment later the voice of SIMON can be heard, muffled within the distance of the house as he reads. There is a deep peacefulness conveyed in the sound of his voice. It intensifies the silence and relates it to the spirit of expectancy over the world and then, over the line of the hill, appear the heads and shoulders of the three CHALDEANS, following one behind the other.]

Enter the three CHALDEANS.

[They rise up, dark shadows, against the pale

night sky, coming down S. and knocking on the door of the house. The sound of SIMON'S voice ceases abruptly. A moment later he appears at the open door.

Enter SIMON with ANNA close behind him.

FIRST CHALDEAN

Are you the master of the house ?

SIMON

(Folding his hands and bowing his head.) I am he and it is yours.

FIRST CHALDEAN

We need only to fill our bottles, that are empty, with water for our journey.

SIMON

Enter—the house is yours. *(Both he and ANNA stand outside the door to allow them to enter. Filled with wonder their eyes look from one CHALDEAN to another.)* My wife is your servant and will fill your bottles for you.

FIRST CHALDEAN

We will not enter.

ANNA

(Coming forward to take their bottles.) There is milk in the house and cakes of bread. Is your journey far ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Some three days into the East.

ANNA

(Taking each bottle, each one bowing as he gives it to her, and going to door into the house.) There shall be milk and bread to keep you through the night. Come with me, Simon. *(As they move to exit, speaking in an undertone.)* Make cause for them to stay; make any cause.

[Exit SIMON and ANNA.]

FIRST CHALDEAN

(Watching them as they go.) Close that door. *(The THIRD CHALDEAN, a younger man than the others, obeys.)* We have seen this man before.

SECOND CHALDEAN

In the hills, herding his sheep, as we came northwards to Jerusalem.

FIRST CHALDEAN

True. Let me speak. Answer no questions. Unless there be a sign that we should tell what we have seen, our service is done. The will of Herod that has been revealed to us concerns but One. I spoke with the woman's husband in Bethlehem as I told you. This night they are journeying into Egypt. Fate is stirring in the world.

SECOND CHALDEAN

Even the stars move from their courses. Last night they fell like heavy drops of rain out of the Zenith to the South.

THIRD CHALDEAN

Pointing this way they fell.

FIRST CHALDEAN

Fate is stirring in the world.

SECOND CHALDEAN

May it be our service is not done ?

THIRD CHALDEAN

Why did the stars fall here ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Unless there be a sign—keep silence—eat little if at all and let us depart ; the feet of Herod are not slow, nor his eyes dim.

THIRD CHALDEAN

What sign ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Who knows a sign until it comes ?

[The THIRD CHALDEAN seats himself on the ground beside the others as SIMON and ANNA enter with the bottles of water, the cakes of bread, and the milk in a bowl.]

SIMON

(Bringing the bread to them.) I am only a poor shepherd, sirs. This is but simple fare.

ANNA

(Coming forward with the bowl.) And milk—we have no wine.

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FIRST CHALDEAN

We thank you but we will not eat. It is our thirst alone needs quenching. (*He takes the bowl and drinks, passing it to the* SECOND CHALDEAN.)

ANNA

(*Drawing her husband aside as they pass the bowl from one to the other.*) Ask now, Simon—they will not wait to eat.

SIMON

(*Turning at her request.*) There is room that you may sleep here, sirs, until the day break. The hills are hid with thieves.

FIRST CHALDEAN

(*Rising.*) We carry nothing but our staffs and must be gone.

SIMON

(*As the others rise, picking up their water-bottles, and ANNA clutches his arm.*) One moment—we have met before—when I was herding sheep.

FIRST CHALDEAN

True.

SIMON

A star had brought you from the East, you said, to worship him that should be born King of the Jews. (*They give no answer.*) Did you find him?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Time is a fruit that ripens. When it falls, shepherd, take it then.

SIMON

(*Passionately.*) I am of Judea, sir, and not as these Gentiles or Galileans ! We both are Jews, my wife and I, she of the city of Jerusalem itself and I here of Kerioth ; must we not know if our King be born to save us from those who tread all Israel into dust ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

When time falls, shepherd.

ANNA

(*Eagerly.*) But the wind blows, sir, and much fruit falls before its time.

FIRST CHALDEAN

Who shall determine the winds of God ? They come from no-whither—they blow no-whence. The will of man can only use them for his purpose as they pass. I have no will to speak but what the voice of God direct me. (*He has turned away with his companions, when the sound of Judas, lifting up his voice in a shrill cry from the house, reaches their ears.*) Was that a child that cried ? (*The other CHALDEANS stop and turn.*)

ANNA

My child, sir.

FIRST CHALDEAN

Is it a man child ?

ANNA

It is.

FIRST CHALDEAN

How old ?

ANNA

Born to us three months ago.

FIRST CHALDEAN

(Turning back and coming down S. towards SIMON and ANNA. His two companions stand watching him and waiting.) God speaks in sudden ways.

SECOND CHALDEAN

Is it a sign, master ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

(Turning to answer.) It is a sign. *(Turning to ANNA.)* Where is your child ?

ANNA

In the house.

FIRST CHALDEAN

What is his name ?

ANNA

Judas—of my husband's name—Iscariot, which is of Kerioth.

FIRST CHALDEAN

(Repeating it.) Judas Iscariot. Would you save your child ?

ANNA

(*Anxiously.*) From what, sir ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Even now, there is a decree sent forth of Herod the King, to slay all men children that are in Bethlehem, even to the uttermost parts of Judea. Your child will surely die.

ANNA

(*Clinging to Simon's arm.*) How can this be ! Simon ! It surely cannot be ! What evil is to Herod in so young a child !

SIMON

Is it He, sir, that is born King of the Jews whom Herod seeks ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

You have spoken it.

ANNA

What can we do ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

No less than she who this night with her infant at her breast is fleeing into Egypt.

SIMON

Is it alone in Judah Herod seeks ?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Have you not read the prophet Micaiah out of Moresheth?

SIMON

In the synagogue I have heard his words. (*Pointing to the scroll he still holds in his hand.*) I have no script but that—the words of Enoch.

FIRST CHALDEAN

(*Repeating the words of Micah as recorded in St. Matthew's gospel.*) “And Thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.” Where else should Herod look?

SIMON

(*Comforting ANNA.*) Why tremble then! Syria will shield us. Even in Idumea across the hills we shall be safe. Be thankful that the word of God has come to us before it is too late. (*He still keeps his arm about her.*) You have seen Him, sir—of whom the prophet spoke? It is true? The King of the Jews is born?

FIRST CHALDEAN

We have seen Him.

SIMON

(*Eagerly.*) Can you not speak then now, and tell us all?

FIRST CHALDEAN

Shepherd, our destiny is only in the sight of God

—all that a man doeth in the eyes of man and of himself, he doeth of his will, but knows not the result. The sign I spoke of was that I should warn you of your infant's fate. If I speak more, only my will shall speak it.

ANNA

(*With maternal curiosity.*) Then give your will, sir. Tell us whose child He is—this Prince of men.

FIRST CHALDEAN

(*Slowly and deliberately.*) The Son of one Mary, the wife of Joseph, a carpenter in Nazareth.

ANNA

(*Unable to keep back the note of scorn.*) A Galilean !
(*Proudly.*) My son is Jewish born.

SIMON

(*Chiding her.*) What matter if He be the King of the Jews ? It is in Jerusalem He will reign.

FIRST CHALDEAN

The whole world shall be His kingdom, shepherd.

SIMON

(*Echoing it.*) The whole world.

FIRST CHALDEAN

(*Contemplatively.*) The air was warm with the breath of cattle where He lay—and straw the bed of Him Who

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comes to rule the world. (*Turning to Simon.*) I have spoken the word of God—get you from this place, if you would save your son. We shall not meet again—farewell.

[He turns, joins his two companions, and together they all three pass over the hill to S.L. watched by SIMON and ANNA as they disappear beyond the ridge. Instinctively they both move to the top of the ridge and stand watching the three CHALDEANS as they descend into the valley.]

ANNA

(*Touching his arm.*) Strange men are in the world, Simon.

SIMON

There are ways more strange than ways of men, Anna.

ANNA

He that is born in a manger, you mean ?

SIMON

And we that were warned this night.

ANNA

Can it be ought to do with us ? (*Moving apprehensively towards the house with the rousing of her protective instinct.*)

SIMON

Did you not hear him say it was a sign ?

ANNA

When Judas cried. (*She moves nearer the door of the house.*)

SIMON

What did he mean? And also when he said, "Our destiny is only in the sight of God. All that a man doeth in the eyes of men and of himself, he doeth of his will." What did he mean?

ANNA

(*With eager intuitive impulse.*) Suppose it were that our Judas too is chosen for the needs of God?

SIMON

And what he doeth in the eyes of man—what of that?

ANNA

(*With increasing impulsive inspiration.*) Why—that the thing he is, he chooses for himself, just as the Chaldean chose to speak.

SIMON

(*Still doubtful of her reading.*) What should Jehovah need of a shepherd's son?

ANNA

(*Triumphantly.*) What then of a carpenter's in Nazareth of Galilee! (*For the moment her ambition for her son outweighs her apprehension of his danger.*) Simon! Simon! Do you not perceive! This is the

truth! He had a sign, he said, a sign for what? *(She leaves the doorway and comes eagerly up S. to him, where he still stands looking down into the valley. She clutches his arm and looks up into his face.)*

SIMON

For what?

ANNA

To warn us too that Judas might be saved from Herod's hand for what God needs of him. *(Eagerly.)* See—the moon has risen. It is clear light now to point our way. Let me make ready and waste no hour of time. *(She takes his arm to draw him towards the house.)* What shall we need? In Idumea we shall find a ready roof to cover us. *(He stands with an intense motionlessness, gazing down into the valley in the direction of the three CHALDEANS. She drags at the sleeve of his garment.)* Simon! Simon! Is there no stirring in your heart? Our race has learnt and lived in exile. Shall we fear this little exile now that bears such fruit for our son? Wake, husband! Wake! Let your heart leap with mine! *(She looks eagerly into his face.)*

SIMON

(Looking towards the house.) You must go alone. I cannot leave my sheep. Get ready. I will saddle the ass and come with you till the day breaks. *(She turns and moves slowly down S. to the house.)*

[Exit ANNA.]

[SIMON turns again, looking over the valley in the direction of the three CHALDEANS. Then, as his thoughts revert to all he has heard that

night, he raises the scroll in his hand, turning so that the light of the moon can fall upon the script, and reads in silence a moment—then aloud.

SIMON

(*Reading.*) “And the Righteous One shall appear before the eyes of the elect. . . . Where then will be the resting-place of those who have denied the Lord of Spirits? It had been good for them if they had not been born.”

[*He lowers his hand, holding the script and looks out over the hills.*

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE I

Interior of SIMON ISCARIOT'S house in Nain—thirty years later. Time—middle day.

This, the living-room of SIMON'S house, indicates an improvement in the shepherd's circumstances since he lived in the hills by Kerioth, where he possessed only the bare necessities of life.

The door on to one of the streets of the little town of Nain is set up S. at S.R. There are two windows in the same wall to S.L., giving a far more brightly lighted interior. Rugs are on the floor, curtains suggesting greater comfort before the exits at S.R. and S.L. It is the house of one differing as much as would the house of a farmer from that of the shepherd whom he employs. Simon is now the owner of sheep grazing on the pastures in the plains and the hills about Nain.

[As curtain rises, ANNA, now a woman of fifty-two, is found weaving at a small hand-loom down S.L. At S.C. is her daughter LOIS, mixing food in a bowl on the floor. LOIS is a girl of about twenty years of age—full-grown to womanhood as are such girls in the East.

LOIS

Love is better than knowledge.

ANNA

(*Weaving—her tone of voice has little sympathy with her daughter.*) Where did you learn that?

LOIS

As you talk I think it.

ANNA

(*Annoyed.*) Then now you have said it—what does it mean?

LOIS

Judas loves her—it means that, and you have not even knowledge from whence she comes.

ANNA

(*Sufficiently irritated to cease from her work.*) It is because we do not know. Would you have your own brother wed with one who bows down to strange gods, such as these Greeks and Phœnicians serve?

LOIS

He serves the one God—what is it to him?

ANNA

(*Indignant.*) He! And are they not one when they are wed! Your talk is mad as that of the Galilean out of Nazareth. He does not bring the Law, He says, to the heathen or the Jews—but to Gentile and Jew alike, as though they both were one—as though the Gentiles were blessed as we of Israel are blessed!

LOIS

I have heard nothing of the teachings of this man, Jesus. I say only what comes to me to say. Judas loves her.

ANNA

(*Ironically.*) And if they are wed, shall Simon, your father, leave all his flocks to one who is defiled and unclean before the Law?

LOIS

She comes to the house.

ANNA

And have I not purified everything her hand has touched? But how shall he be purified, if he defile himself with her who is outside the Law of Israel?

[LOIS shrugs her shoulders as she rises and carries her bowl out of the room by S.L. exit. As she crosses, SIMON, an old man now, enters by door up S.R.]

Enter SIMON.

[*He closes the door, laying his hand affectionately on LOIS' head as she kisses him.*]

[*Exit LOIS S.C.*]

ANNA

(*Looking up from her weaving at SIMON and at LOIS as she exits.*) I would have all sons, or none, rather than one daughter.

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SIMON

What hath she done ?

ANNA

(Going on with her weaving.) She would urge our Judas to wed this Huldah of the Canaanites.

SIMON

(Firmly.) It cannot be.

ANNA

She heeds no word of mine when I say that.

SIMON

'Twas not for this I laid by my money when I lived in Kerioth, or bought my flocks and gathered them in Nain.

ANNA

(Rising and coming to him.) Or for this, Simon, that I brought a son into the world of whom they told he should be great amongst men.

SIMON

(Correcting her.) 'Twas not they told it, Anna. It was your heart that leapt to find it so.

ANNA

I hear the steps of Judas. *(She makes a movement towards the door.)* Simon ! If she be with him, she shall not cross the door.

SIMON

(Less aggressive than her.) There will be disturbance if we thrust her out. They will hear of it in the synagogue.

ANNA

(Preparing her mind for anything that may happen.) Can there be more disturbance than is here *(She puts her hand on her breast)* in me!

Enter JUDAS *up S.R.*

JUDAS

(Standing at the door, arrested by their attitudes of expectancy and preparation.) What happens? *(They do not answer.)* It is I.

ANNA

(Relieved that he is alone and, as he comes towards her, putting her hand affectionately on his shoulder.) We thought——

SIMON

We were afraid——

JUDAS

(Seeing what they mean, with a half laugh.) That I had brought Huldah with me. *(He looks at them both questioningly.)* But I had thought to find her already here. *(He questions them with his glances again.)* Has she been here? Have you sent her away?

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ANNA

(*Firmly.*) We should, if she had come.

SIMON

(*Less firmly.*) We should——

JUDAS

(*With restrained passion.*) If you turn her from the door, you turn me also.

ANNA

(*Clinging to his arm.*) And all your father has laid up and all your inheritance!

JUDAS

What trade could I not follow as well? In Damascus there is work and fortune for a man who wills it. She would come with me there. What profit if he have a score of flocks will it be to a man whose heart is gone beyond the pastures and the hills where he should follow them?

SIMON

(*Hurt and amazed.*) You that were son of mine would dwell in the midst of the heathen?

JUDAS

Have not others done as much?

ANNA

(*Distressed—going back to her loom.*) This is not the son I suckled at my breast!

JUDAS

(Love for his mother rising in him despite his love for Huldah. He crosses to her and affectionately bends over her.) Mother! You judge me ill. I love my home. *(Deeply in his heart.)* I love her more.

ANNA

(Shuddering.) Unclean.

JUDAS

(Defiantly.) What is unclean—but what the Law has made it so?

SIMON

As a young man you feared God and the Law even as I have feared it my life long.

ANNA

Judas—you were ambitious too. *(Stopping her weaving, stretching out her hand and drawing him close to her.)* Have you forgot that day at Kerioth when you had come in from the hills and I took you on my knees and told the story of them who came out of the East, reading their way by the stars to find a child in Bethlehem?

JUDAS

They found nought else. Why recall it to me?

ANNA

Your eyes were bright that day. Across the floor you strode—I see you now—and swore that you would serve Messiah with a sword when you were come a man,

JUDAS

(*Bitterly.*) Babe's talk—not man's.

SIMON

Messiah *must* come.

JUDAS

Show me him then, this babe they found, show me this King of the Jews. Herod is no king. Always we shall be slaves. 'Twas false the light that star gave forth that led those three across the desert of Syria. What man is there in all Judea can bring Israel back to the glory that was hers before the exile into Babylon.

SIMON

I have heard strange sayings of this man called Jesus.

JUDAS

A Galilean !

SIMON

There was one in the market to-day declared He had cleansed a leper—that he had seen it with his eyes. And He has made the blind to see and the sick to rise up from their beds.

JUDAS

These things have been done before. Did not Elias cleanse the Syrian of his leprosy ? What has this Jesus said to show he is a leader of Israel ? Some Sabbaths ago in the Synagogue at Nazareth, they gave

Him of the book of Esias to read. I talked with one who heard Him and having read, He spoke and said to them that sat there: "No prophet is accepted in his own country" . . . and other things he said, until in their wrath the people thrust Him out into the streets. Have we not accepted the prophets in Israel? How should He lead the people when He seeks no acceptation of His word?

SIMON

Maybe he waits to declare Himself until the time be ripe.

JUDAS

It will not ripen in such a man as this. Not in my days will Messiah come and what ambition is it for a Jew to be slave to Herod with his heathen gods and slave to Rome as well? (*He moves to door up S.R.*)

ANNA

(*Bitterly.*) She has wrought this change in you.

JUDAS

Indeed, I thank her for it. (*He opens the door and looks out, then, still keeping the door open, he looks back.*)

ANNA

(*Burying her face in her hands.*) These were not the hopes I gave you. This was not the greatness we allowed should be a glory to our house.

JUDAS

How much longer would you have me wait!

(*Bitterly.*) There is no destiny for me. She brings me all the best there is in life and you would have me fling it down for phantom things, a tale of three strange men, told thirty years ago, and never come to pass; the glitter of a star that shone above an infant in a stable in Bethlehem! God of our Fathers! Is flesh and blood such fragile stuff as this, that I should put aside my love to gain it? What if she be of Canaan and cast away unclean by laws of Rabbi's and their Scribes? Love cleanses purer than any law.

ANNA

Promise, Judas, you will not wed her yet.

JUDAS

I will swear no oath or promise anything. (*Looking out again.*) She comes now down the street. (*He moves down to S.C.*)

ANNA

(*Moving with determination to S.L.*) I do not wait for this. Tell me when she is gone. (*She turns at the door.*) Simon.

[*Exit ANNA.*]

JUDAS

(*As SIMON moves to the door S.L.*) You will not wait? (*He does not answer.*) No greeting? No word? (*Simon wrestles with tradition and the love of his son.*) She is flesh and blood. Kindness, and her heart beats like a dove's in your hand. (*SIMON stops at the door, bowing his head, seeing which, JUDAS speaks without resentment.*) Go then—I am not left alone.

[*As he says this, HULDAH enters by door up S.C. Seeing her, SIMON still further lowers his head and goes out.*]

[*Exit SIMON as HULDAH enters.*]

[*She is about the same age as LOIS, very dark, very beautiful, a gentle creature, soft of voice and eye, having that appeal as of some dumb thing that once loving, loves always and knows no evil where she loves; such a woman as often suffers at the hands of men, inspires love but cannot secure it.*]

[*She enters the room timidly and, seeing the figure of SIMON retreating, she stops, realising her unwelcomeness.*]

JUDAS

(*Moving towards her, holding out his hands.*) Take my hands. (*She takes them and he draws her towards S.C.*) Where I am is yours. (*He holds her hands and looks long at her face.*) You need fear none of these. They are my father and my mother. God made them so—not I. What I make is my own. (*Moving his hands to her shoulders.*) I have made you mine. (*Suddenly and passionately, as though he could look at her no longer, he takes her fiercely in his arms and loads her eyes and lips with kisses.*)

HULDAH

(*In a moment's release.*) Always I would have fear of you did I not love you so much.

JUDAS

(*Still looking at her.*) Sometimes I fear myself.

HULDAH

(*Surprised.*) Why?

JUDAS

I want so much of life.

HULDAH

(*Clinging to him.*) Judas, how can I ever give you all you want?

JUDAS

(*Holding her in his arms.*) Beloved, I want no more than you.

HULDAH

But all they say you must forego.

JUDAS

What must I?

HULDAH

Your inheritance.

JUDAS

A flock of sheep and pastures on the hillside!

HULDAH

Your home——

JUDAS

(*Ironically.*) Home! A heap of stones a man

gathers to call his own. Any with toil and patience can do that, and set a roof above their heads and strut about the streets and say 'tis theirs, and throw the door wide for all to see—and find it empty.

HULDAH

(*Gently.*) But once you thought great thoughts, Judas. When first we met, great ways of life were to be yours.

JUDAS

(*Kissing her.*) Dreams.

HULDAH

You had them waking then.

JUDAS

(*Looking at her anxiously.*) Do you wish to put me from you?

HULDAH

Wish! Is fear a wish? To put you from me? Judas, after—after? . . . (*She presses her face against his breast.*)

JUDAS

Ah—that word—after. After that word, beloved, I know no thing could put me from you or you from me.

HULDAH

(*Eagerly.*) Nothing?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

JUDAS

(*After a pause.*) Nothing.

HULDAH

Why did you pause to speak ?

JUDAS

Did I ?

HULDAH

It seemed a pause to me.

JUDAS

Perhaps I was thinking what thing if any there might be.

HULDAH

And thought, but would not say ? (*As he does not answer.*) The great ways of life that were to be yours, and because you will wed a woman of Canaan can be yours no more in Israel ?

JUDAS

Is Israel the world and at the feet of Rome ? We will not stay, even in Galilee, when we are wed. There is Syria—and beyond. There is even to Rome itself. (*Holding her closely to him.*) I shall do ill indeed before God and before myself, beloved—if we are not wed and one in the sight of all men. There is no thing in the land shall part us. Love is the best of man and has no seeking for itself. It is the best of me. (*With a deep breath of joy she comes into his arms.*)

HULDAH

(*As she lies in his arms.*) I would have given you all for nothing, Judas. I have never asked for this.

JUDAS

Never. If it is a gift, of my own will, I give it. (*Raising his head and looking above her.*) To be cast out of Judah—is it so fearful a thing? For what is Israel now, a dismembered body, by the wolves of Herod and the eagles of Rome torn limb from limb, its flesh all rotting in the searching sun. (*Looking back into her eyes.*) Is it so great a thing of my own will to be no more a Jew, so we can build our home together in some sweeter place than this?

HULDAH

Judas, at heart you are a Jew. Cast out your body may be—they cannot cast out your soul and all my life shall be to shelter that from pain which lives in exile. Do you believe I can do so much, beloved?

JUDAS

(*Holding her passionately.*) I do believe. (*He looks up from kissing her at the sound of footsteps passing hurriedly in the street outside—first one, and then another, then two or three people together, talking as they pass.*) What is happening?

HULDAH

What should it be?

JUDAS

The sound of feet—of people running.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

HULDAH

(*As the sound continues.*) Some disturbance again.

JUDAS

(*As he listens.*) Another riot against the hand of Herod? That is this land of Israel, a seething pot, for ever bubbling over in the fire of discontent, while Rome stands by to beat down the thickening scum that rises to the top! (*Laughing ironically.*) Israel! God of Abraham! What pain is it to be cast out of Israel? (*He leaves her and is about to go to the door up S.R. to see for himself, when LOIS, breathless with running, enters.*)

Enter LOIS S.R.

LOIS

(*With excitement.*) He is coming across the plain!

JUDAS

Who is coming?

LOIS

The Man of Nazareth who dwells in Capernaum.

HULDAH

Him they call Jesus?

JUDAS

What does He want of Nain? Already He has created disturbances in Nazareth. Is that not enough? They drove Him out of the Synagogue. He preaches

sedition. A Sabbath breaker He is. Belike He does not even know the Law. (HULDAH *looks up swiftly at JUDAS as he says this.*) How near is he?

LOIS

A mile away—no more.

JUDAS

How do they know He comes to Nain?

LOIS

A crowd is with Him—a whole band of men and women. He stops and teaches as He walks, and all of them they learn and listen to his words. Some have come on before to say He comes to Nain. I am going out to the gates.

JUDAS

You will only find yourself caught up in some disturbance.

LOIS

They say it is not so He teaches—but love to all, and goodwill amongst men.

HULDAH

(*Touching Judas' hand.*) Shall we go too with Lois?

JUDAS

For what good? Stones will be thrown by some. So it always begins.

LOIS

They say He is Messiah come at last.

JUDAS

(Laughing.) Messiah! *(Taking HULDAH'S arm.)*
Come then, we'll see Him, this captain of Israel. We'll
ask Him how He means to save Judah from her enemies.
Messiah! *(He laughs again as he puts his hand on*
LOIS' shoulder and follows her to door up S.R. HULDAH
pauses a moment watching him. Just as he is about to
go out, JUDAS turns and holds out his hand to HULDAH.)
Beloved—my beloved.

[She comes forward and takes his hand and
they go out.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE II

Inside the gates of the town of Nain. All towns and cities in the East were walled about with high walls to protect them from the marauding tribes of nomadic enemies. Such a gate as that intended to be the principal interest of this scene, is to be found to-day in any of those cities of the East which have escaped the destruction of war.

Here it is placed at S.C. up S. in the walls, low enough to reveal a long strip of bright blue sky above. It leads out into the open plain beyond where, in the distance, can be seen green pastures and the rising mountain of Tabor. The fierce sunlight lies outside on the plain, intercepted by the deep shadow of the wall and falling again down S. on the street of the town that leads to the gate.

The street itself has opened out into a broad space before the gate. There are no houses at either side, but to S.L. of the gate there are one or two booths, more or less permanent structures, occupied by merchants of the town selling such wares as dyed stuffs and pottery, that lend an effect of brilliant Eastern colouring to the scene. This open space before the gate is roughly paved, giving the suggestion of little more than hardened mud breaking easily into dust.

Down S.R. stands a well-head, supplying this end of the town with water, at which the women come to fill their pitchers. The step around it is worn by the countless feet that have trod its surface. It stands out in the full glare of sunlight away from the shadow of the walls.

[As curtain rises to the sounds of the life of the town, a girl is raising the bucket, dripping with water, out of the well to fill her pitcher. At the booths, people are gathered, buying and selling. Two beggars sit close to the gates, importuning alms from those who pass them, coming in or out. They do no more than hold out their hands muttering blessings automatically whether they receive gifts or not. The mumbled sounds of their voices contribute towards the noise of the life of the town. Close by the well sits an old man, apparently blind, playing in snatches an instrument with the dull, monotonous phases characteristic of Eastern music. Two or three men in a group stand at the open gate looking across the plain, talking together excitedly and occasionally pointing outwards up S. Two children, running, enter from down S.L. and disappear through the gates out into the plain, turning to S.R. The girl at the well turns to watch them. The three men at the gate laugh at them.

[Immediately following them come two women from the same direction, hurrying to the gates out of the city, talking closely as they go. Three Pharisees in their extravagant garb, striving to preserve their dignity above their curiosity, enter almost simultaneously from down S.R. passing the well, and ostentatiously pausing to give alms to the beggars. They also go out by the gate, when the curiosity of the girl at the well overcomes her. Bearing her pitcher on her shoulder, she joins the group of men at the

gate and stands there with them looking out across the plain.

GIRL

Does He come this way? Will He pass the gates?

FIRST MAN

There was a man from Capernaum came with Him, passed through the gates a while ago and said He was coming into the town.

GIRL

(Indicating the Pharisees.) Why then do *they* go out to meet Him?

SECOND MAN

Not for welcome you may be sure. *(They laugh together.)* They go to snare Him in His words.

THIRD MAN

An easy bird for them.

GIRL

Why easy?

THIRD MAN

Are they not bred of the law? 'Tis mixed with the spittle in their mouths. What craft of tongue will a carpenter's son out of Nazareth have with one of those?

FIRST MAN

(Looking out of the gates pointing across the plain.)
He has stopped again.

THIRD MAN

'Tis a hill He stands upon to raise Him up above
them as He speaks.

*(Two men come carrying dyed stuffs over their
arms from one of the booths at S.L. and
approach the gates to go out on to the plain.)*

FIRST MAN

No need for haste. He comes this way into the
town.

FOURTH MAN

There will be others to sell then. *(With a laugh.)*
Haste makes first.

FIFTH MAN

First is best—there's none to strive with it.

THIRD MAN

*(Laughing and calling after them as they pass through
the gates on to the plain.)* He'll buy no wares! He
carries not a lepton in his purse!

GIRL

How came He to this power He has to draw the
people?

THIRD MAN

He is practised in healing. There are always idle ones and sick to follow such. Some to be healed, the rest to see it done.

GIRL

(*Still looking across the plain.*) It would seem He did more of speaking.

THIRD MAN

'Tis a part of their trade. A juggler does as much—engages the ear and tricks the eye.

GIRL

Look how they cling about Him!

FIRST MAN

More than twenty score there must be there!

GIRL

(*Setting down her pitcher beside the wall.*) I cannot wait. I must go out and hear what He says to those three of the Pharisees when they question Him.

[*Exit GIRL by the gates.*]

THIRD MAN

(*Laughing.*) So we come into the world. Curiosity will not keep her maiden long. (*They laugh together.*)

Enter JUDAS, with HULDAH and LOIS at S.R.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

FIRST MAN

Here comes he of Kerioth to join them.

JUDAS

(Coming up S. to the gate with the others.) Where is this Nazarene? *(He looks out of the gates.)* There He comes. *(He puts HULDAH in front of him and points out across the plain.)*

HULDAH

How does He gather such a company? See, he keeps standing still—he has no room to walk.

LOIS

Let us go out there. *(She makes a movement to go.)*

JUDAS

(Holding HULDAH'S arm.) Not I. *(To HULDAH.)* Stay with me. *(To LOIS.)* Go if you wish. We will wait here. He needs no greeting. There go three Pharisees to meet him. 'Tis plain enough He comes to the town. Let Him pass by—we'll hear Him as He comes.

LOIS

But see He's speaking now. I want to hear all He says.

[Exit LOIS by gates up S.]

JUDAS

(Calling after her.) Beware of touching those whom He has healed. They are not clean before the Law.

(*He does not see HULDAH's swift glance at him as he turns to her.*) If indeed they *are* healed. Have any seen Him close at hand raise sick men from their beds or give sight to the blind?

THIRD MAN

The man from Capernaum who passed through the gates a while since, swore he had seen Him lift a lame man to his feet that had been crippled from his birth.

JUDAS

(*Leaning his hand upon the pillar of the gate and standing on the tips of his toes.*) A thin face He has. Ill-fed and spare. His walk is slow—look—like a tired man. Or is He lame and needs to heal Himself?

THIRD MAN

He has come across the hills from Capernaum.

JUDAS

I should be calling for a beast to carry me if I had walked as far.

HULDAH

They crowd about Him so.

JUDAS

(*Turning, as the women—six of them—preceding the bier in a funeral procession enter from S.L.*) What body comes here to be buried?

[Enter six women with the widow of Nain in their midst. She is weeping, with her hands covering her face. After them follow four men carrying the bier on which lies the dead man, wrapped in a linen cloth. Behind them comes the Priest of the Synagogue and behind him, in a group of mourners, men and women.]

THIRD MAN

(Looking.) That is the only son of the widow of Zechiah. A young boy—no more than eighteen years—all that she had. He died but yesterday at noon.

[JUDAS, HULDAH and the THREE MEN prepare themselves in attitudes of respect for the passing of the funeral through the gates, but at S.C. the four men deposit the bier upon the ground, and the PRIEST of the Synagogue commences a short address to the relatives and mourners during the delay—as was the custom amongst the Jews of that time. JUDAS and HULDAH listen with the rest.]

PRIEST

Three good gifts has the God of our Fathers to give, and all of them has He given unto Israel. The Law He has given us—the Land He has given us. Likewise has He given us the world to come.

WIDOW

(Leaving the other women and, still weeping, coming to the bier and kneeling down beside the dead body of her son.) Oh, my son! Joel, my son! What is the Law or the Land to me now! Thou hast taken with thee the

breath out of my nostrils and the sight out of mine eyes. In darkness shall I walk without thee and pain and sadness will be the measure of my days. When the morning breaks I shall look and find thee not. In the burden of the day my heart will lean forth and fall of weariness. In the dark night my voice will call thy name and no answer shall be given me. Oh, my son—my son—what is the Law or the Land to me now ! (*She gives way again to silent weeping.*)

HULDAH

(*Holding JUDAS'S arm closely.*) Death has been cruel to her, Judas.

JUDAS

Death is always cruel. It has no master.

PRIEST

(*In the unemotional voice of the officiating priest.*) In the world to come there is peace. There shall the tribes of Israel be gathered together ; husband shall find his wife and mother her son—and the wisdom of Jehovah shall bring joy unto all.

WIDOW

(*Looking up from her hands again.*) Lord, bring me swiftly to that world to come that we may meet again !

PRIEST

(*Raising the widow to her feet and turning to the men.*) Lift up the dead.

[*The four men raise the bier, the WIDOW and the PRIEST resume their positions, and the*

JUDAS ISCARIOT

*procession passes on through the gates.
JUDAS, HULDAH and the others bow their
heads as it goes by.*

[Exit procession through the gates on to the plain.]

HULDAH

Whatever God shall hear that cry of hers must surely grant it soon.

JUDAS

(As they follow the procession with their eyes.) Ah—soon! How long have we cried in Israel for Messiah! *(Bitterly.)* And has He come? Nations die—as that boy has died. Death creeps at night into their eyes. It is creeping into the eyes of Israel and who shall stay it? Who can raise us in this land of Israel from the death of the greed of kings and the persecution of our enemies!

HULDAH

(After a pause in which his words ring their full significance.) See—what is he doing—the Nazarene?

FIRST MAN

He has come out from the crowd of people.

THIRD MAN

(Indignantly.) He has stayed them that carry the dead! What right has He?

JUDAS

Dares He tamper with the dead, as well as them that

live ? (To HULDAH.) Come with me ! Does a Nazarene think he can console her in her sorrow ?

[Dragging HULDAH with him they both exit by the gates up S.]

THIRD MAN

Look—he is putting aside the Priest and the Pharisees—come !

[They all exit hastily.]

[Gradually all through this scene the sound of the people following JESUS outside to the gates of Nain has been increasing in volume, from the most distant murmur, scarcely audible, to the confused conglomeration of sounds of human voices in a nearing crowd of people. By the time that the three men at the gates leave the stage, the sound of these voices almost dominates the voices of those on the stage. The last words of the THIRD MAN as they go out are heard quite plainly but no more, and for a moment after they have gone the sounds of the crowd become slightly louder, not the sounds of an angry rabble, but of many people speaking at once.]

[Now the scene is empty of all but the blind man who, through all the noise of the voices has been playing his instrument, and the two beggars who sit rubbing their sores at the entrance of the gates. So much have these figures become part of the scene without playing in it, that their presence remaining should be scarcely realised. Even the music of the old blind man mingles and is all but lost in the confusion of voices. Suddenly,

then, there falls an intense silence, made the more significant by the fact that for a moment all that is heard is the music of the blind man which, after a few quavering notes alone, stops also as the beggars at the gate half rise to their knees, gazing out in fixed attitudes across the plain.

[This silence should be held for the full duration of its utmost effect upon the senses.

[Then, through the gates into the town enters the figure of the dead boy, still wrapped in his grave clothes, his face intensely pale, as yet not warmed by the return of life.

[Following him at a short distance comes his mother, half weeping and in an amaze, not yet realising the reality of what has been done. The eyes of the boy are staring and wide as though he were still walking in a world between life and death. His mother is sobbing with joy and fear, stretching out her hands to her son, whom, in his daze of newly recovered life, walks on incapable of response.

[From the moment of their entrance in the midst of the intense silence, the sound of the voices begins again, now with a muffled note of awe in it, strikingly different in tone from before, as gradually, at first in threes and fours, the crowd accompanying Christ begins to pour into the city.

[Amongst the crowd that increases more and more in volume can be seen the three Pharisees, the girl with the pitcher, the three men at the gates and the others who were seen going out, amongst them the four men,

carrying the empty bier and the Priest with them. All are torn in vital interest between the dead boy brought to life and the Man who has raised him from the dead. Alternately they look before them and then backwards over their shoulders at Christ Who is approaching the gates.

[*And all this time the volume of voices is increasing to the crescendo of the body of the crowd as they approach the gates with Jesus in their midst. Borne along with the stream of the people and entering the gates, comes JUDAS with HULDAH and LOIS. He is a pace ahead of them and like the rest, continually gazing back over His shoulder. He crosses the stage outside the crowd down S.*

Enter JUDAS, HULDAH and LOIS.

HULDAH

(Catching at the sleeve of his garment. There is a note of fear in her voice.) Judas—how was it done? Do you really believe He did it?

JUDAS

(Answering her, but in a pre-occupied manner as though he were speaking to himself.) Do I believe! I saw!

HULDAH

(Anxiously, as they cross the stage in the flow of the crowd.) Death has found its master then!

E

JUDAS

(Pausing an instant to look behind him.) Aye—death—and more than death. *(He moves on again, taking no more notice of HULDAH and LOIS.)*

[Exeunt JUDAS and HULDAH and LOIS with the rest of the people accompanying them.]

[The sound of the crowd is swelling still more loudly now, the people themselves are pouring more densely through the gates. Gradually and so indefinitely as to be realised without being perceptible, the light outside the gates increases as the sound of the voices grows in volume. Nearer and nearer the crescendo approaches. Turning up S. as though to someone just outside the gates, the beggars stretch out their hands. Every moment seems to be the last before the figure of Christ is seen in the midst of the crowd. Imagination is stretching out to the sight of him as he enters through the gates, when the curtain slowly falls, shutting out the sight of Him at that very moment of crescendo when anticipation can offer no more.]

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE III

Same as in Scene I. Two hours later.

[As curtain rises LOIS breathlessly, with awe and wonder, is telling SIMON and ANNA all that has happened.]

LOIS

And he rose up from where he lay, and through the gates with eyes that stared at life again, he walked into the town. *(They listen in amazement.)*

ANNA

What of the other? Where was He?

LOIS

He followed, with the crowds about Him.

SIMON

Into the town?

LOIS

Into the town.

ANNA

(Rising with increased excitement.) He is in the town now ?

LOIS

Now—at the house of Elymas the weaver.

ANNA

Is He to be seen there ?

LOIS

He is teaching and speaking in the room and outside the door ; the sick and lame are lying upon the stones for Him to heal them and a man who has a devil that shouts and blasphemes and laughs like one in the destruction of hell. I tried to get into the house to hear Him but the crowd was too close and so I came to tell you.

SIMON

Where is Judas ?

LOIS

In the house. Huldah waits for him outside.

ANNA

He saw it all ?

LOIS

All.

ANNA

(*Turning to SIMON.*) Shall we go also and see for ourselves?

SIMON

(*Turning to LOIS.*) What manner of man is this Nazarene?

LOIS

To see? A thin man—tall but wasted thin as though life were a stream that ran from Him as swiftly as it came.

ANNA

(*Moving a step towards the door.*) Come and see Him, Simon, for yourself.

SIMON

(*With the petulance of an old man.*) Wait! Wait! We may not get within the house—my bones are old to jostle in a crowd. (*Turning to LOIS.*) What did He say? Aught of Israel? Had He some message He had brought like to that one who did baptise and minister in the wilderness?

LOIS

He spoke of a kingdom.

SIMON

Well——

LOIS

It is hard to remember His words.

ANNA

Why waste our time, Simon? Come and hear for yourself.

SIMON

(Impressively.) I waste no time, Anna. You have not heard what I have heard.

ANNA

(Coming back a step from the door in curiosity.) What have you heard?

SIMON

They say He is Messiah come at last to Israel. *(After a pause, turning to Lois.)* Did He say aught of that?

LOIS

Nothing. He talked of peace and of the joy of men. There was no word of battle or of strife in any word He said.

SIMON

Not of the Governor or of Rome itself—of Cæsar or of Herod—not one word?

LOIS

Not one. It was as though, in all I heard Him say, as though the world might be a place where gladness was, if we would listen to His word.

SIMON

What word?

LOIS

Oh, I cannot remember it all. I only know it sounded as He spoke, as if there were a happy world, so close, that with no more than lifting of a latch we all might enter if we chose.

SIMON

The Son of Man could not shake the hearts of the mighty with such words as those.

ANNA

(Going to the door.) Come then, Simon. He is no Messiah, this Nazarene—but come and hear Him. *(She goes to the door up S. and opens it.)*

SIMON

(Following her.) I cannot push my way into a crowd, nor is my hearing all it was. *(Mumbling to himself, he follows ANNA out into the street.)*

[Exit ANNA and SIMON.]

[LOIS goes to the window and watches them down the street. Then, with a mind set fast on all she has seen and heard in the last hour, she comes slowly down S. to the loom at which her mother worked, and, in a dream of thought, sits down and automatically goes on with her mother's work, stopping at moments to look up into the distance of her vision. At the sound of a knock on the door, she rises quickly and opens it, holding it wider for HULDAH to enter.]

Enter HULDAH.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

[Without a word, HULDAH comes slowly down S. and seats herself facing lights, staring out before her without speaking.]

LOIS

(Coming down S. and standing beside her for a moment in silence.) They have gone out.

HULDAH

I saw them.

LOIS

Was that why you came?

HULDAH

I was wandering up and down in the street. I hid myself as they passed and then came here.

LOIS

Where is Judas?

HULDAH

I left him still in the house of Elymas.

LOIS

Did he know you were waiting?

HULDAH

(Keeping back her tears.) He must have known. He saw me from the house. I beckoned him.

LOIS

And he did not come out to you ?

HULDAH

(*Swallowing her emotion.*) He shook his head and turned his back.

LOIS

(*Kneeling down beside her.*) What has happened ?

HULDAH

Sometimes I understand—sometimes I cannot.

LOIS

Until that happened—until the boy rose up and walked—he was almost insolent in his contempt, and then he seemed to fall into a dream. I saw he scarcely spoke as we came back into the town.

HULDAH

It was not me he answered when he spoke.

LOIS

Who then ?

HULDAH

Himself. (*Pause.*) I know what has happened. (*She stares before her—seeing it all.*) Nor do I wonder at it. (*Still staring, she goes on, half speaking to herself.*) Master of death—and more than death. Of life as well—of Judas' life—and mine. What was it he said of those that follow Him ?

LOIS

I have tried to remember things He said. How can you remember the exact words. The meaning remains, that is all.

HULDAH

We must give up—everything—that was what He said. (*After a pause.*) Judas is going to give up me.

LOIS

(*Clinging her arm about her neck.*) But why? Why? He loves you. It was not love we must give up, but hatred and envy and spite and greed. Why should Judas give you up? He loves you.

HULDAH

(*In the same distant tone.*) Judas is going to give up me.

[*They sit together staring at what lies before HULDAH when the door is thrust open and JUDAS—a different man—enters the room. He stands a moment looking at them, then turns and closes the door.*]

Enter JUDAS.

JUDAS

(*Coming down to them as HULDAH rises to her feet.*) He has sent all away and closed the door of the house and is alone.

HULDAH

(*As LOIS slowly rises to her feet and moves away from them.*) Did He speak with you Himself?

JUDAS

He spoke.

[LOIS, *making pretence of not leaving them too obviously, sitting for a moment at the loom and then getting up, goes out at S.L.*

[*Exit LOIS.*

HULDAH

What did He say?

JUDAS

(*Closing his eyes as he recalls it.*) Everything the world could need to know. (*He puts his hands over his face.*)

HULDAH

(*For a moment standing and watching him, then with intense simplicity.*) What are you going to do, Judas?

JUDAS

(*Suddenly dropping his hands from his face and looking at her.*) What do you mean?

HULDAH

There is something you have made your mind to do.

JUDAS

How did you know?

HULDAH

(*With a smile of intense sadness.*) Beloved, how should I fail to know? (*She lays a hand on his arm.*)

JUDAS

(Suddenly holding her shoulders.) What do you know?

HULDAH

You are going away from me.

JUDAS

(Staring at her.) And you can say it in that quiet voice? No tears, no pleading?

HULDAH

(Her voice catching to a break in her throat.) Then it is true?

JUDAS

(Failing to understand her.) You said you knew.

HULDAH

(Exercising all her self-control.) I knew—I did not believe.

JUDAS

(Turning away and crossing stage, beating his hands together in the distress of his mind.) What else can I do? All my life I have said, when the Messiah should come, I would serve Him in His Kingdom.

HULDAH

(Turning when he is the other side of S.) Is He Messiah?

JUDAS

You saw outside the gates ?

HULDAH

I saw.

JUDAS

You heard Him speak—His voice—the silence that fell, even upon those Pharisees, as the words sounded from His lips ?

HULDAH

I heard.

JUDAS

And you can ask—is He Messiah ? 'Tis true He speaks in parables, yet every meaning is clear. Why, He spoke of His Kingdom, that it was of God and there were some that stood about who whispered in the hollow of their breath and laughed at that. A scribe there was—a man of Herod too—with my bare fingers I could have torn out their throats.

[Watching him as he speaks, HULDAH sinks into a sitting posture on the floor, then, as he finishes, in despair she bends over, lying down and giving way to the sobbing of her voice. For a moment JUDAS looks at her, wrought to anguish by the sorrow he has brought her, then he stoops swiftly to his knee beside her.]

JUDAS

Beloved, your tears ache in my heart. There is a

calling in His voice and every word He says. How can I choose but go?

HULDAH

(Leaning up and clinging to him.) But you said you loved me! You said it was the best. Love is the best of man, you said. You said it was the best of you. I shall do ill, you said—O Judas! I cannot bear it if you go. I have given all—you take it with you if you leave me now.

JUDAS

(Fighting with his conscience and his ambition.) Dear love—I love you yet and always shall—but there is that a man must do that calls him in his soul. *(Holding her so that she may see as well as hear his words.)* Do you not understand the Man this is, that we have seen to-day? It is not only His power over death, 'tis with life His greatest miracle will be.

HULDAH

(Putting her clenched hand trembling to her mouth.) I knew you had thought that.

JUDAS

Thought! I know! In this short hour in that house, he has said words that will ring down the ages when the world has heard them, too. 'Tis not only Israel He will save. The world will be His Kingdom, Huldah, a greater empire than Rome and every man that lives will tremble at the name of Judah. I see greater than I had ever dreamed and greater than the world has ever known before, and one day when His

Kingdom is set up—there will be no law that makes unclean. He said it, Huldah! He said it! He told us all as we stood in that house, the world was one, a world of brothers, knit with the same blood of God. That is the gospel He will preach throughout Judea and when we all have joined Him for our several parts, He will march into Jerusalem with faith all armed in thousands in His steps and Herod and Rome shall vanish in a night.

HULDAH

(Slowly, rising to her feet.) All this you believe, Judas?

JUDAS

All this—and more and more!

HULDAH

(Battling with the sobbing in her throat.) Love is only—only a little thing then? *(JUDAS clenches his hands and lowers his head and with sobs still breaking in her throat she turns up S. and goes slowly out.)*

[Exit HULDAH.

[For a moment JUDAS does not seem to realise her going, then in a sudden impulse, he hurries to the door and looks out.

JUDAS

(Calling.) Huldah! Huldah!

JUDAS ISCARIOT

[There is no reply. Slowly he closes the door and comes down to S.C. There he stands, staring out before him—knowing he has chosen, wondering was he right.]

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE

The roof-top of a house in Jerusalem. The stage forms the flat surface of a roof of a characteristic Eastern house in Zion overlooking the city of Jerusalem towards the hill of Golgotha beyond the Temple.

Up S. there is a low parapet as protection from the street below, and showing at S.C. the head of the outer steps from the roof to the ground.

In the near distance are the closely gathered roofs of the city, showing the rising structure of the Temple in the distance on the outskirts. Beyond this is the open country rising to the line of low hills of which Golgotha is an insignificant spur, then disappearing into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and lifting again to the hills beyond.

It is evening time and through the progress of this act the sun is sinking through all the various tones of light to the pale primrose and the grey that falls before darkness.

It is about a year and a half after the previous act. The house is that occupied by SIMON ISCARIOT and ANNA for the Feast of the Passover to which they have come, as was customary, to partake of in Jerusalem that they may be able to worship in the Temple.

[As curtain rises, SIMON is seen standing on the parapet up S. overlooking the city. As he is standing there LOIS enters by the steps from the street below.

LOIS

(*Anxiously.*) Is Judas in the house ?

SIMON

Not yet. He comes. I had word from one he sent to me.

LOIS

How soon will he come ?

SIMON

Soon. They said soon.

LOIS

(*Looking over the parapet down into the street.*) He may not find the house.

SIMON

What is the matter that you need him in such haste ?

LOIS

There is much the matter.

SIMON

Very well. He knows the house where we are for the time of the Passover. He will come when he can.

LOIS

(*Distressed—going to the head of the steps and looking down.*) I did not see him as they came into the City.

I sought for him amongst the crowds. They are still gathered in the streets.

SIMON

(Sitting down.) I could not go. The years are falling round me. But I shall see him.

LOIS

Judas ?

SIMON

No. The Christ ! Judas has promised he will bring Him to me, and I shall see Him with my eyes before I die. It is a great thing.

LOIS

(Coming down to him.) What is a great thing ?

SIMON

For Judas. All this that is to come to pass. There will be a high place for him in Messiah's kingdom.

LOIS

Kingdom !

SIMON

Why not ? It must be. Already He bears their purse.

LOIS

(Solemnly.) There will be no kingdom, father—not as you dream of. A king does not ride upon a colt

into the city of his kingdom. In your kingdom are swords—not branches of the palm to greet him. This man is not Messiah.

SIMON

(Irate.) What do you mean? He is of the house of David. He is of Judah. When last that Judas came to Nain he told us what you did not hear.

LOIS

Tell me.

SIMON

He is that child who was born in Bethlehem, the night those three men from the East knocked on our door in Kerieth and warned us as they went. It has all come to pass. Who is He then, if not Messiah?

LOIS

(Awed.) I do not know who He is. I feel afraid to know. *(Going to the parapet again.)* Oh, where is Judas?

JUDAS

(Out of sight on the steps from the street.) Who wants me?

Enter JUDAS by steps.

LOIS

Judas! I want you. *(She takes his arm and draws him down S. a little away from SIMON and speaks for JUDAS only to hear.)* Huldah is in Jerusalem.

JUDAS

(Touched by a sudden emotion.) What is she doing here?

LOIS

She left Nain some months ago.

JUDAS

I heard that.

LOIS

She is poor, Judas. *(He bends his head.)* She has left her people.

JUDAS

(A little bitterly.) I am poor. I have left my inheritance.

LOIS

(Intensely.) She is ill, Judas. I think she is dying.

JUDAS

(Affected by this news.) You know this?

LOIS

I have been with her—at her side all day.

JUDAS

What sickness is it?

LOIS

A fever. She is in a house where many are for the Passover—it is close with people—the very air she breathes is but the breath of others. She will die, Judas! She will die if she cannot be brought away.

JUDAS

(*Distressed.*) But where?

LOIS

Here. (*She watches him closely as the difficulty of what she asks appears to him.*) Do you wish her to die?

JUDAS

(*Resentfully.*) Why should I wish her to die? I loved her. Love was not an idle thing with me. Until I beheld Him Who shall save Israel, it was the greatest thing I saw. (*He leaves LOIS and crosses to SIMON.*) Father, Huldah is in Jerusalem.

SIMON

(*Unemotionally.*) What is that to me?

JUDAS

She is dying of a fever.

SIMON

Or that?

JUDAS

Lois has come from being with her. She is poor, ill-housed—unless she is brought away she will die.

SIMON

(*Laying his hand on JUDAS' shoulder.*) Does that trouble you now? Death is for all.

JUDAS

Would you think I had no heart. It does trouble me. She must come here.

SIMON

(*Withdrawing his hand.*) Your mother would not permit her in the house.

JUDAS

(*Firmly.*) Nevertheless, must she come, if it is but here upon the house-top. I have chosen my life apart from her—I have chosen my life for greater things—but I will not cast her out in the hour of sickness. I would even break the Law rather than that. (*Turning from him.*) You must say what you wish! She *shall* be brought here if life can thus be saved for her. (*He turns to LOIS.*) Find those that can carry her. Bring her here at once on to the roof-top.

[LOIS *presses his arm and without speaking hurries down the steps into the street.*

[*Exit LOIS.*

[JUDAS stands a moment watching her go, then comes down S. to SIMON, standing with determination before him.]

JUDAS

I would not disobey my father but for that which deeply in my heart was right.

SIMON

(*Laying his hand on JUDAS' arm.*) I am an old man, Judas, and a woman's tongue is more fretting than it was.

JUDAS

I will tell her—the blame shall be *mine*.

SIMON

She will listen the better to you, if you do not let her think that woman returns again into your life. She is proud, Judas. Anna is proud of you. This was her interpretation of the Chaldean's words. She knew that night in Kerioth that greatness would come to you.

JUDAS

(*Bitterly.*) Greatness!

SIMON

(*Anxiously.*) Is it not so?

JUDAS

(*Bitterness underlying all his words.*) I sent you

word that we would enter the city in triumph to-day. We did. A crowd of thousands following us. Not one was armed. They came with branches in their hands. A mere company of Romans with their short swords could have whipped us from the streets.

SIMON

(*Very seriously.*) Judas! (*Pause.*) Is He truly the Messiah?

JUDAS

(*Firmly.*) Truly He is. His power is like to God Himself. There are some of us, such as He called Simon—who was Peter—who in the ecstasy of their love would swear He was the *Son* of God. I have not such folly as they, who all are Galileans and know nothing of the heart of Judah. I tell you that only to prove the power He has. He is indeed Messiah come to Israel. But—listen to me! What good to the nation can He do, if He does not declare Himself?

SIMON

(*Seating himself as JUDAS sits on the ground.*) Wait, wait, you say He is Messiah, then must He not know the hour when His kingdom shall be come to Him?

JUDAS

(*Bitterly.*) I have waited—until my heart is sick. Now, I have thought, he would declare himself—and now—and now—but never is it now. To-day of all days I believed it would have come. But no—again, until the hour will slip and without swords or spears to arm us, we shall be taken for common brawlers in the streets and flung into the prisons for our pains.

SIMON

(*Agitatedly.*) Are you afraid of that ?

JUDAS

Every man who thinks must be afraid. (*He seems reluctant to say more.*)

SIMON

What do you think ? What do you know ?

JUDAS

I only know what I have heard—in whispers here and there about the streets to-day.

SIMON

What do they say ?

JUDAS

The Chief Priests and the Scribes—the elders—all are plotting how they can take Him with guile to avoid an uproar amongst the people. But if they take him, then they will take us too. We preach his words. Some of us too, have healed the sick as he has done. It may not be the prisons only when we are in their hands. (*He points dramatically over the house-tops up S.*) There lies the hill of Golgotha. They would crucify Him if they dared.

SIMON

What is His preaching then that they should fear Him thus ? Is it *against the Law* ?

JUDAS

(*Seriously.*) Father, it is beyond the Law. He preaches the Kingdom of God—as well as man. A brotherhood of men at peace in a world where love, not hatred is. That is his gospel. These are the words of Christ. Many things He says, in riddles it would seem we cannot understand—but this that I say He teaches, is simple as a child could hear—and all the world will know it when He comes into His kingdom.

SIMON

Ah, but how will He come? Not as you say with branches of the trees to strike the mighty from their seats. Perhaps if they do arrest Him then He *will* declare Himself.

JUDAS

What? What did you say?

SIMON

If they arrest Him, what would He do then?

JUDAS

(*Rising to his feet and beginning to walk up and down in deep thought.*) What would a man do?

SIMON

With His power, Judas.

JUDAS

(*Stopping as he walks.*) His power! One day when

we were out in a ship upon the sea, he fell asleep and while He slept, a storm broke over us. We were overwhelmed and woke Him and, rebuking us for our fear, He stretched out His hand and bade the winds be still, and a great calm came, so that we lay with our sails drooping to the mast. The power He has! I have seen Him walk upon the sea as though it were a beaten path across the plain. Beholding Him thus, Peter would have done likewise. (*Laughing, somewhat ironically at the remembrance of it.*) He stepped out from the ship and knew the water that he walked on and was afraid—and sank.

SIMON

What then? Who saved him?

JUDAS

Christ came across the sea and held out His hand and raised him from the deep. Father, you do not dream His power. If they laid hands upon Him, He could bring lightning out of the heavens to be a sword for Him.

SIMON

They could not arrest Him on the Passover, Judas.

JUDAS

They might before.

SIMON

That should be swift.

JUDAS

They would arrest us too.

SIMON

Why should you fear that? Has He not given some of you His power? Did you not say there had been some had healed the sick as he has done?

JUDAS

Peter has, and John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and others too—not I. Mine has been another service and I have played it with my whole heart. I am fighting for His kingdom—but not with words—as they fight. Were it not for me, nothing would be done that should be done. For that I became one of them. He needs me, the Messiah. One day the world will realise He needed all I did to establish His kingdom upon earth.

SIMON

Judas, if others have this power, with your intent of purpose, might you not persuade one of them to strike a blow that would set all aflame to rouse Him? I am an old man and a sword is a heavy thing for me to lift, but well I know these things are not effected without blood. If they have this power, one of them could strike it.

JUDAS

(*Jealously.*) One of *them*! Why not I? To all of us He gave it. To *all* the twelve. I have not practised healing. I tell you, I have had other things to do. I do not know what power I have until I put it to the test. Why should *they* reap the harvest and not me? (*Bitterly.*)

Already they are ambitious. There came the wife of Zebedee to Christ, asking Him might not her two sons sit, one on His right hand and the other on his left when he came into His kingdom. They! Who have done no more than echo His words!

SIMON

'Twere better then for you, my son, that He were taken if you mistrust your power.

JUDAS

(*Resentfully and with pride.*) Why should I mistrust it? What chance have I had to know?

SIMON

(*Laying his hand on his shoulder, with shrewd counsel.*) 'Tis not a thing that you should chance—or others might step in. Make Him declare Himself. He is the power. Not you, nor James nor John, nor any of you.

JUDAS

Had you a thought I had forgotten it? (*He shakes his head.*) I serve Him, that is all. But the elders will not arrest Him now before the feast. The city is full of people who would rise up in His defence and make such disturbance as Pilate would punish with a heavy hand. How could they take Him quietly so that none might know? It will not be now, unless—(*He stands a moment thinking, then goes to parapet and looks over.*) Father, if you would not see her when she comes, go down into the house. They that bear her are approaching now.

SIMON

(*Rising.*) What will Anna say to this?

JUDAS

Have no care what she will say. I will tell her. I do not fear her tongue.

SIMON

(*As he goes towards S.L.*) Well—you are young and have not learnt the peace there is when a woman's tongue is still. (*He turns at S.L. where it will appear he will pass along the roof to the stairs into the house.*) Judas!

JUDAS

(*Not turning away from watching at the head of the stairs.*) What is it?

SIMON

If he should declare himself, should break in pieces the power of Herod and thrust Rome out of the land, it will be well for you, my son?

JUDAS

Why draw into my mind thoughts of myself? They are too ready there. I am not as Peter, who swears he would die and suffer prison for the Christ. I have not such self-abasement. Yet I would fight for the cause—I would hazard much—but always I am hot for pressing on towards our fulfilment. Ill would a prison cell console me even for the Christ's sake, and how can a dead body serve the Son of Man?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

SIMON

Well—well—our destiny is in the sight of God. Always I hear those words—all that a man doeth in the sight of man and of himself he doeth of his will, but knows not the result.

JUDAS

(*Thoughtfully.*) How often have I heard you say that.

SIMON

(*As he goes.*) And I shall say it yet again.

[*Exit* SIMON.]

JUDAS

(*Standing a moment in thought—then at a sound awakening to reality and turning to the stairs.*) You have brought her safe? (*He makes way for LOIS and the two men who carry HULDAH on a form of stretcher on to the roof.*)

Enter LOIS, HULDAH and two others.

LOIS

(*In an undertone as the two men lay HULDAH down below S.C.*) I felt death walking with us all the way.

JUDAS

(*As the two men go.*) Go down into the house and bring all to make her at her ease. Some wine if she needs it, or milk. (*As LOIS goes.*) And water too, to cool her.

[*Exit* LOIS *S.L.*]

[JUDAS turns to the two men and from the purse he carries gives them some money for their trouble.

JUDAS

You can go. (*He stands waiting for their departure.*)

[*Exit the two men.*

JUDAS

(*Turning at once to where HULDAH lies and kneeling down beside her.*) Have you more comfort here?

HULDAH

(*Holding out her hand.*) Judas! It is so easy now.

JUDAS

(*Taking her hand.*) I meant it should be so.

HULDAH

But what do your mother and your father say?

JUDAS

You need not fear for that. Lois told me where you were and what had befallen you. Had the Law itself forbade me, I would have brought you here.

HULDAH

(*Leaning back again.*) I would thank you and I would say—beloved—if so I might. It will be peaceful now. As I lay in that house, I little thought it would be thus.

JUDAS

Did you—like others—think I had no heart at all—that where I loved, I ever could forget that love, or scorn it when it was in need? I follow what I believe! Can a man do more? If I have chosen wrong, I shall be shown. But all of you would think me traitor to the thing I loved.

HULDAH

(Stretching out both her hands.) Judas! I do not think that! Never had I the thought, even when I lay there in that house and struggled for my breath and felt the fever creeping in my blood, I understood. Do you forget I heard at Nain and saw the thing He did. I have not forgotten, but only sometimes when I think about it all, I wonder how He who teaches love should come, as you believe, to bring a sword. It is the one thing in all my thoughts that distresses me. Why does He conquer death, only to bring it the more?

JUDAS

How should you understand? No woman understands the ways of life, save what her heart dictates for her. Some harvests there are can only be gathered with a sword.

HULDAH

But does he not bid us love our enemies?

JUDAS

How heard you that?

HULDAH

Someone spoke that had listened to His words.

JUDAS

Love our enemies ! (*He moves away from her as he speaks.*) He has indeed said that. But how can you love the thing you hate ? Of all men but Him I would say I did mistrust the man who could not hate. Will love call Herod from his sin ? Will love drive Rome out of the land of Israel ? Are they but sheep these vultures that feed upon us ? Is it a shepherd's voice that will call them from their prey ? Love will not free this land of Judah, but hate that wields a sword to drive its enemies before it. Never—never—never will the name of Christ prevail with love ! Rather His name will die before love has the power of victory. Has this explained it to you ? (*He turns expectant of her answer.*) You do not understand. (*Smiling.*) You are a woman and love seems all to you. (*Pause.*) Is it not so ? (*Pause.*) Is it not ? (*A different note in his voice.*) Why do you not answer ? (*HULDAH moves faintly as though she tried to answer. JUDAS hurries to her side.*)

HULDAH

(*Very faintly.*) I do know—what you mean. I have so little breath—to speak.

JUDAS

(*Anxiously.*) Is the fever upon you now ?

HULDAH

(*Putting out her hand and finding his.*) More than the fever, Judas.

JUDAS

What more ?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

HULDAH

Did not Lois tell you ?

JUDAS

She told me you were sick of a fever.

HULDAH

Did she not tell you I was—dying ?

JUDAS

(Almost passionately.) That you would she told me if you stayed where you were. But here there is sweet air for you to breathe and food that you must need, and wine to make you strong. I will not have you talk of death.

HULDAH

How can I fail to speak of that which is so close ? It is far from you—your voice could scarcely summon it. But I can hear it, listen *(Pause)*, in my breath.

JUDAS

(Remorsefully.) I have brought you this !

HULDAH

(Clinging to him.) No—no !

JUDAS

I took the zest of life from you !

HULDAH

Ah—my beloved—but for some greater thing. That day you said—the Christ was master of—our lives—from that moment—I knew—I had no place. (*Her voice becomes fainter.*) We must all—suffer—for the best in us. Love—was the best in me. I would not forego it—for all the suffering—it has been. And now—this hour with you—is almost joy to me. I know you follow the best in you. Maybe you will suffer too. I pray you may not suffer—too much.

[She leans back in exhaustion in his arms. He looks at her closely and then lays her down, rising to his feet and hurrying to S.L.]

JUDAS

Lois! Haste! Lois!

LOIS

(*Off S.*) I am coming.

[Enter LOIS S.L. carrying pillows to make a bed for HULDAH. She has also a bowl and plate, and various things. JUDAS relieves her of some of her burden. They carry these across to HULDAH.]

JUDAS

She has it in her mind that she will die. And now she lies so still.

[They stoop together and gently make a bed for her to rest on. When this is finished, they look up at each other.]

JUDAS

She does not stir. Has life gone out ?

LOIS

(Leaning over her.) No, I feel her heart. But it is only like the wind stirring a dead leaf on a tree. *(Suddenly looking up.)* Judas ! She will die !

JUDAS

(Distressed.) How can you be sure ? It is a swoon. Care will yet save her.

LOIS

(Seriously.) She will. That heart is beating in the hand of death. *(She listens again to HULDAH'S heart, then suddenly looks up.)* Judas !

JUDAS

What is it ?

LOIS

(In a whisper.) The Christ ! *(They both stare at each other.)* What are your thoughts ? *(Pause.)* From the dead He has raised them. Why does your mind not leap to it ?

JUDAS

I am thinking.

LOIS

Yes, yes ! But here's no time for thought ! You cannot wish she shall be fingered by death before He lays His hands on her !

JUDAS

(Staring before him in self-centred pre-occupation, speaking, not to LOIS, but to himself.) Now I should know—now—if I put it to the test.

LOIS

What test ? Why speak in riddles when the need is clear enough ! Surely love cannot be so dead in you that her death would pass you by unmoved. Only the Christ can save her. Already she has gone beyond the power of man.

JUDAS

(Turning, with determination.) Love is not dead in me ! I am not unmoved ! Nor is she passed beyond the power of man. *I* can heal her.

LOIS

(Amazed.) You !

JUDAS

(Passionately.) Yes. I—all of us—the twelve, he sent us forth to teach His kingdom, giving the power He has to us to heal the sick and cleanse the lepers. To raise up the dead even and cast out devils, He gave us power.

LOIS

And did they do so?

JUDAS

Some of them. No chance has been to prove it to myself—till now.

LOIS

(Almost believing he can do what he says, yet still amazed.) What will you do?

JUDAS

Still is her heart beating?

LOIS

(Leaning over and listening.) Still.

JUDAS

(Gathering himself together and, after a deep breath, looking upwards to the sky, clenching his hands together and concentrating all the power of his will as, still in an amaze, looking up from her knees, LOIS watches him.) God—our Father in Heaven—show me the power that has been given me and make this woman whole.

[He continues with hands clenched, staring at the sky, LOIS still watching him until slowly, as though she were half afraid to look, she lowers her head, bending down over HULDAH and for a moment remaining there. Then with a quick gesture, she looks up.]

LOIS

Judas ! (*He looks down at her.*) She is dead.

[After a long pause, while the knowledge of it is coming slowly to him, he stands there. At last he bends down feeling HULDAH'S face and hands and laying his hand on her heart, then looking up with the terrible realisation of his failure.]

JUDAS

His power is not in me. It *is* in them. It is not in me. 'Tis He who must declare Himself. That is what I must do. That is *all* I can do.

LOIS

Judas, what are you saying ! If she is dead—is it too late ? Could you not bring the Christ ?

JUDAS

(His eyes strained upon the knowledge that has come to him.) Was not God's answer plain enough ?

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

SCENE I

An outer court in the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest.

A row of columns stands at either side of the scene, with space between each to allow of two or three people walking abreast to pass through. Those at S.R. lead into the palace and the hall in which Christ is being heard in judgment by Caiaphas. Those at S.L. lead out of the palace. The scene is an open space enclosed by columns between two parts of the palace. Up S. is a stone wall stretching right across the stage. The deep blue night sky can be seen above it. There is no furniture on the stage.

[As curtain rises, three men and a woman are seen at S.L. gathered about a brazier, burning on the floor. It is standing between the pillars so that only half of it is in sight. Against the column above the brazier one man is leaning, two are seated on the floor on stage side of brazier, and the woman leans with her back against the column below the brazier. As they talk together it is apparent there are others warming themselves at the fire on the other side of the columns, out of sight off stage, but close enough to enter into the conversation. Leaning against a column at S.R. and standing quite alone, JUDAS is discovered, looking off towards the hall where the trial of Jesus is taking place.]

FIRST MAN

(Warming his hands at the brazier.) They will settle it quickly, for to-morrow is the day of Preparation.

SECOND MAN

And one way only will they settle it.

THIRD MAN

(This is the voice of one on the other side of the brazier. He is out of sight behind the column.) What way shall that be?

FIRST MAN

(Answering him.) Death. The High Priests and the elders are determined so. *(He points with his arm stretched out towards S.R.)* Think you His trial there before Caiaphas means aught but one thing? The hall is a'press with witnesses, declaring He has said He was the King of the Jews.

SECOND MAN

He has said He is the Christ—the Son of God. Ha! The Son of God! What should we be doing now if the Son of God were truly in our midst!

THIRD MAN

(Off stage.) Is not God always with us in our midst? We are all Jews and believe so much as that.

GIRL

(Laughing.) Hear him! All Jews!

FIRST MAN

(Addressing his question to the man off S.) Are you of Judah?

THIRD MAN

(Off S.) It is not they of Judah that alone are Jews.

FOURTH MAN

(Sitting on S. by brazier, looking up at the girl.) He sounds by his voice to be a Galilean.

FIRST MAN

If you suspect He be the Son of God amongst us why not go out in the hall there and hear Him speak? Mayhap you will not have such chance again. His voice will be still to-morrow.

THIRD MAN

(Off S.) If He were the Son of God, how could His voice be still?

[All this time, JUDAS has been standing alone by the column down S.R. mostly looking towards the hall of judgement as though he would hear the trial if he could and with his eyes would pierce the walls that separate him from it. Sometimes he looks across stage at those who sit by the brazier, and once as though he recognised someone, he moves to place himself out of sight.

[Suddenly, at the approach of someone of importance, the men and girl about the brazier get to their feet in attitudes of respect.

Enter a Priest through columns at S.L.

PRIEST

(Seeing JUDAS, hesitating and looking back over his shoulder at the others before he speaks. They have returned to their former attitudes around the brazier.) Do you watch your work?

JUDAS

My work is not done yet.

PRIEST

You say it. *(He shakes his head.)* It is done. From here He will be hastened before Pilate. Pilate will fear and give us what we ask. Before the sun falls to-morrow your King of the Jews will have no breath to declare himself.

JUDAS

There are many hours between this moment and the fall of to-morrow's sun.

PRIEST

(Smiling.) Do you think we should have given you thirty pieces for a price and let you go at will, if we had believed you spoke what was true?

JUDAS

(Scornfully.) Your price! What is that to me? I would have flung those thirty silver pieces down if 'twere a price I needed for what I do.

PRIEST

(Looking at him closely.) Tell me then—now you have delivered Him into our hands—do you believe He is the Son of God?

JUDAS

(*After a pause.*) No. Let them who believe that have the courage in their hearts to say it. I do not. (*The Priest smiles.*) Nevertheless that is no cause for mirth. He is the Messiah that should come. He can drive out the mighty from their high places in the land. For that He came. For that He waits the moment He best knows will bring Him its fulfilment.

PRIEST

Why then does He not speak now? They tell me He has answered His witnesses not one word.

JUDAS

It may not be before Caiaphas, not before Pilate even. (*With a certain awe in his voice.*) It may not be before the arms of the cross have held Him, that He will come down from death for all to know Him as He is.

PRIEST

(*With warning.*) Have a care for yourself. Such faith as yours might serve you ill and wipe out all that you have done for us.

JUDAS

(*With a note of fear.*) What I have done—is done. If it has served you, then I am worthy of my hire. What is my faith to you?

PRIEST

So be it. I warned you only. The temper of the High Priest is not inclined to pity in this matter. (*He turns away to pass through the columns, then turns back.*) Follow me into the hall and hear Him face His witnesses.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

JUDAS

(Shrinking from the thought of it.) No, He knows what I have done. Until it all falls out as I believe, I do not want His eyes to look at me again.

PRIEST

So be it. Though had I done what you have done, believing what you believe, I would have no fear.

JUDAS

(Fiercely, as though to convince himself.) I do believe it!

[The Priest shrugs his shoulders and passes on through the columns.]

[Exit PRIEST.]

[JUDAS stands lonely as before, looking after him.]

FIRST MAN

(At the brazier.) What have they done with those that preach the blasphemy in His name? *(He addresses the other who sits behind the pillar.)* Stranger—do you know?

SECOND MAN

(Before the third can answer.) Surely they will take and condemn them too.

[Enter a maid of the HIGH PRIEST'S household from between columns at S.R.]

MAID

(Seeing JUDAS and stopping to speak with him.) Have you been within the judgement hall?

JUDAS

No.

MAID

What are you waiting for? Why stand alone?
There is a fire there and company.

JUDAS

A man is alone in company.

MAID

That is true. (*She indicates the hall.*) He is alone
in there, and company enough all shouting their wit-
nesses against Him. I have been behind a curtain.
I have heard it all.

JUDAS

(*Eagerly.*) What has He said?

MAID

No word. He will not speak. To every question
Caiaphas has asked of Him, He keeps a silence like
one too far off to hear. Listen! (*They stand an instant
listening.*) It is finished.

Enter a messenger—running.

MESSENGER

(*As he comes through the hall.*) Condemned! Guilty
of death.

JUDAS

(*Calling after him.*) Has He declared Himself?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

MESSENGER

(Stopping a moment.) The High Priest asked Him
—was He the Christ—the Son of God.

MAID

He spoke then ?

MESSENGER

I am, He said, and other words of blasphemy as well.
(As he goes on to S.L.) They take Him now to Pilate.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

*[As JUDAS stands there shaken in his fear that
Christ has not yet assumed His power, the
MAID catches him by the arm and points
between the pillars beyond the brazier.]*

MAID

There is one who was with this Man.

JUDAS

(Looking.) Which ? Which one ?

MAID

He who sits there beyond the pillar warming his
hands. I asked him some little while ago.

JUDAS

(Quickly.) What did he say ?

MAID

He denied it. But I am sure he was the man I saw

as they came into the city. Did you not see them too?
Do you not know him?

JUDAS

(Looking, then looking away.) How should I know!
They are all strangers to me.

*[Impressed with her belief and still looking, she
leaves JUDAS and crosses to the brazier
where she can be seen.]*

MAID

(Speaking to someone beyond the column just off S.)
You also were with Jesus of Nazareth!

THIRD MAN

(Off S. as JUDAS listens intently to his reply.) I know
not, neither understand I what you say!

FIRST MAN

(Looking closely.) Did I not see you in the garden
with Him?

THIRD MAN

(More vehemently, off S.) I do not know the Man!

*[JUDAS listening, leans back against the column
behind him, laughing bitterly. In the far
distance of the city a cock is heard —
crowing.]*

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE II

The roof-top, as in Act III.

It is the ninth hour of the next day and from the sixth hour there has been darkness over the city. On the Hill of Golgotha in the far distance, a glow of light can be seen, together with the light of moving torches, faint flickerings, which, with the glow about the hill, just reveal the silhouettes of the three crosses. Nothing more can be distinguished but the indistinct groupings of the houses of the city in the near foreground.

[As curtain rises, JUDAS is seen alone as in the previous scene, standing at the parapet up S. gazing towards Calvary. For a moment long enough to convey the tension of his mind, he remains there motionless, then in distress, he turns away walking down S. to S.R. then comes across to S.L. At a sound of many voices afar off, he turns swiftly and goes up S. to the parapet again, looking out intently across the city.

Enter SIMON S.L.

SIMON

(Pausing a moment, watching JUDAS.) Never have I known a storm to hang so heavy in the sky, nor yet so long as this.

JUDAS

(*Without looking round.*) At the sixth hour it came.

SIMON

This is the ninth—three hours and no rain falls, no thunder or lightning, only this black night over the face of day.

JUDAS

(*Coming down to SIMON.*) Do you think it has a meaning?

SIMON

What meaning? You are distraught. Ever since you returned last night, you have moved and talked like a man pursued by shadows.

JUDAS

I am.

SIMON

Do you fear then (*pointing towards Calvary*) what will happen over there?

JUDAS

I do not know what I fear.

SIMON

But you said He knew—that He spoke at the feast saying one would deliver Him.

JUDAS

Betray, He said.

SIMON

Deliver was the word you used last night when you returned.

JUDAS

I have heard it since in my ears—it was betray.

SIMON

Well, what is a word? He knew. What was it He said to you? "That which thou doest—do quickly."

JUDAS

(Walking backwards and forwards.) Yes, He said that.

SIMON

Is that not proof enough?

JUDAS

(Stopping—glad of hope.) Of what?

SIMON

That He knew His hour was come.

JUDAS

(Eagerly.) Maybe.

SIMON

(Continuing.) And feared the clamour of the end when He should declare Himself to all, and bade you do quickly that which was in your heart to do.

JUDAS

(Hopefully.) That might be so. *(His hope falling at once.)* But why has it not come before? If not before the High Priest, then why not before Pilate? Why is it so late?

SIMON

I have not heard what happened before the Governor.

JUDAS

(Going to the parapet again and looking out, then turning and speaking as he comes down S. to SIMON.) Pilate warned Him he had power both to crucify and release Him.

SIMON

What did He say?

JUDAS

They only told me what He said. *(He shudders to repeat it.)*

SIMON

(Persisting.) What was it?

JUDAS

He said no power could Pilate have, save it was given him from God.

SIMON

Was that all?

JUDAS

There was more they told me.

SIMON

What more ?

JUDAS

"He that delivered Me unto them," He said, "hath the greater sin." (*Turning away in agony.*) God of Abraham, what have I done that was a sin ?

SIMON

'Tis not too late yet. From the very clutch of death He will come down and reveal Himself.

JUDAS

(*Turning again to the parapet.*) If only that sky would lighten ! This darkness hangs like a curse ! I did what I thought ! I chose what I would do ! What is there left me if my choice was wrong ? Without what I have done, He would have preached or healed ! No more. Now, wherever the Messiah's name is spoken it will be said He was delivered to His enemies before He declared Himself. Have I not done that ? Will there be none to thank me for it ? (*He leans over the parapet at the sound of feet in the street below.*) Who is coming below ?

LOIS

(*Out of sight as she mounts the stairs to the roof.*)
'Tis I—Lois.

JUDAS

(*Turning to SIMON.*) She has been over there—watching on the hill.

Enter LOIS up S.C.

JUDAS

What is happening ?

LOIS

I could not stay to see. It was terrible ! Oh, Judas, I could bear no more. There was His mother and her sister beside the cross and one of the twelve who dared to show himself. And they were watching, with love in their eyes that even tears in flood had failed to wash away.

JUDAS

(The fulness of agony beginning to come upon him.)
Did He speak ? Did He say no word at all ?

LOIS

Yes, He looked down at them and to her who leant in the disciple's arms, He said : " Woman, behold thy son," and to the man He said : " Behold, thy mother," and she knowing He meant that He must leave her, cried aloud, like an animal in pain. *(JUDAS buries his face in his hands and walks down S.)* But that is not all.

SIMON

What more ?

LOIS

Two thieves there were they crucified with Him. *(She points towards Golgotha.)* See the three crosses leaning against the sky.

JUDAS

I heard there were two others.

LOIS

Common men who had soiled their hands with theft. One who reviled Him as they hung there, and cried out if He were the Christ, He could save Himself and them.

JUDAS

And still He came not down !

LOIS

Still. The other thief rebuked Him, asking did He not fear God, seeing they were suffering as Him.

JUDAS

Then ? Then ? What did the Christ say then ?

LOIS

With such mercy and understanding in His voice as I have ever heard, He told him who deserved his death that that day he would be with Him in Paradise. *(In a sudden impulse—unable to control her feelings longer.)* Judas ! Why did you deliver Him to them ! He was not the Messiah you sought—all of you for your own ends—He was greater than that. Why had you no faith ? I do believe He was the Son of God.

JUDAS

(Turning on her in the agony of his doubt.) I want no thoughts from you. You are a woman with too ready a heart for love. Say no more to me “ He was ! He was ! ” I tell you He *is* the Messiah and even now as we stand here, may be descending from His cross to free the land for all of us. *(He stops suddenly at the sound of a voice crying far away out in the distance of the city.)* Do you hear ?

SIMON

I hear nothing.

JUDAS

(As they stand and listen.) A voice—crying out—

crying out some news. (*They listen again.*) It comes nearer.

SIMON

Yes, I hear it now.

[They all stand and listen as the voice calling out some words which cannot be distinguished comes nearer and nearer.]

JUDAS

(*With hope risen to the uttermost.*) He comes with the news! Christ has come down from the cross! I know it! It will get lighter now! Soon we shall see the light!

[A flash of lightning strikes out of the sky as they stand there listening. It is followed by a low roll of thunder in the stillness as they still stand. Then in the silence the voice crying out comes nearer still. JUDAS moves a little down S. to S.C. listening, believing he is going to hear the great news, yet fearing the moment when he shall first distinguish the words. The name of Christ can now be heard in what the voice is crying out, and the second time it is slightly more indistinct as if the one who cried it were turning in another direction. JUDAS hastens to the parapet.]

JUDAS

(*Calling out.*) You! There! What do you call?
(*He leans over the parapet waiting a moment till the owner of the voice comes below.*) Where have you come from?
What do you call?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

VOICE

(*Below.*) From outside the city I have come. They have crucified the Christ on Golgotha. One of the priests bade me run through the streets crying it out.

JUDAS

I know they crucify Him. But what has happened? In God's name say what you cry!

VOICE

The Christ is dead.

[JUDAS stands up from the parapet and slowly moves down to S.C. too dazed to think or choose or act, as the voice crying out: "The Christ is dead: The Christ is dead," dies away in the distance of the city. Suddenly in the desolation and agony of his knowledge, he strides up S. to the head of the stairs.

LOIS

(*Terrified.*) Judas! Where are you going?

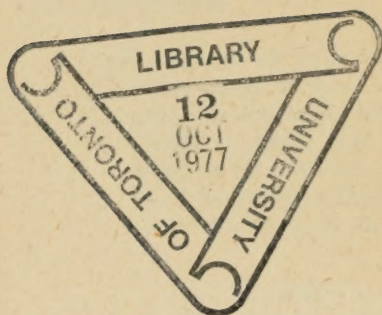
JUDAS

(*In a voice that foretells his death.*) Where? The Christ is dead! Where should I go?

Exit JUDAS by stairs S.C.

[*There is another flash of light over Golgotha and a deep roll of thunder as the curtain falls.*

SLOW CURTAIN



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